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TECHNICAL CHAPTERS.—No. 5.

By E. D.

TAPESTRY.—II.

(COMPLETION.)



"PÉNÉLOPE." A Gobelins
TAPESTRY.

"DURING and from the time of Louis, under the influence of the school of Le Brun, they affected imitations of Greek and Roman forms, which looked out of place in France. They made fine faces, but insignificant figures. The truth, which was formerly naïvely set forth, gave place to studied art; the ideal dethroned the natural; and convention, spontaneity; ingenious, pretty, and even beautiful works, by wanting in that which gives life to works of art, character."

Visitors to Paris may see the work in hand at the Gobelins, and will find some good specimens produced during the late Empire—portraits of artists, in the sumptuous Gallerie d'Apollon, in Louvre.

In England, as in France, tapestry work was taken up by the religious communities, and the hangings which decorated the churches were principally the work of nuns and monks. Famous examples of tapestry are mentioned by our historians, such as three reredos, made for St. Alban's Abbey, in the reign of Henry I. Chaucer had a *tapissier* amongst his Canterbury pilgrims, showing that the tapestry of some kind was not a rarity in his time. In the interesting hand-book to the textile fabrics in South Kensington Museum, by Dr. Rock, to whom we are indebted, the following existing specimens of English-made tapestry are mentioned:—A damaged specimen in St. Mary's Hall, Coventry; a reredos for an altar, belonging to Vinters' Company of London, and a piece in a house at Cornwall. Holland House, Kensington, has some curious specimens of late Flemish tapestry in the raised style.

The most beautiful existing series of tapestry is that which was made from the famous "cartoons"—so called because drawn on stiff paper—by Raffaele, which, having been purchased by Charles I., were rolled up, hidden away, and forgotten for a long period. The history of these famous works is curious. They were executed in chalk, and colored in distemper, by Raffaele and his pupils, for Pope Leo X., in the year 1513. They are about twelve feet high. Of the series of ten, three have been lost, the subjects of these three having been "The Stoning of St. Stephen," "The Conversion of St. Paul" and "St. Paul in His Dungeon at Philippi." The designs of seven, which are now in one of the picture galleries of the South Kensington Museum, are "Christ's Charge to Peter," "The Death of Ananias," "Peter and John Healing the Lame Man," "Peter and Barnabas at Lystra," "Elymas the Sorcerer Struck Blind," "Paul Preaching at Athens," "The Miraculous Draught of Fishes." A tapestry worked from the original hangs opposite to the first-named of the above cartoons.

These cartoons were discovered by Rubens, lying neglected in the warehouse of the manufacturer of Arras, and the painter advised Charles I. to purchase them for a royal tapestry factory established at Mortlake. After the death of the King, Cromwell bought

them for the nation for 300*l.*, but they remained hidden from public view until William III. commanded Sir Christopher Wren to build a room specially for them at Hampton Court, where they remained until removed to South Kensington Museum. The Pope is said to have paid Raffaele 434 gold ducats for these cartoons. The tapestries produced after the cartoons were worked in wool, silk and gold, and were hung in the Sistine Chapel in the year 1519, the year before the great artist died, and excited the greatest admiration. They are now in the Vatican. They are said to have cost 50,000 gold ducats.

Besides the work at Mortlake, there was a manufacture in Soho, London, and at the latter, in 1757, were produced large tapestries for a room in Northumberland House, Charing Cross, now demolished. The designs for this tapestry were by the painter Zuccarelli. Neither of these factories was successful, and they have long ceased to exist.

Before closing this very brief sketch, we should mention that there existed long since in England manufactories for imitative tapestry, the painted cloth already mentioned, and the trade was important enough to be formed into a London guild; in our own country to-day there is much of it turned out, good, bad and indifferent.

Tapestry, it has been said, is neither weaving nor embroidery, but partakes of both; originally, however, it was more like weaving than it is at present. The ancient tapestry loom was like the ordinary loom in form, and this kind was long in use in France and elsewhere, as well as the more modern. The old method is known as *basse lisse*, and the new as *haute lisse*.



"SÉLÉNÉ." A Gobelins TAPESTRY. By M. MACHARD.